Vol. VII. Numb. 46

THE OBSERVATOR.

Considerations on our late Victory in Flanders; *and her Majesty's Proclamations for a Thanksgiving on that Account. Proposals for reforming the Manners of our Army and Fleet. The Original Contract betwixt our Kings and People; and the coercive Power of Parliaments over tyrannical Princes, prov'd against the* Rehearsal.

From Wednesday, July 21. to Saturday, July 24. 1708.

Obs. I Want some farther Account from you, *Roger*, of our late Victory near *Audenard*, and of what Improvements have been made of it.

Country-m. Why truly, Master, the foreign Gazettes and Courants do so frequently contradict themselves, that no Judgment can be form'd upon them as to Particulars; only in general, the Victory appears to be undoubtedly true and great, tho' the *French* Gazetteer, and their News-Writers, would fain impose upon the World, that 'twas a Sort of a drawn Battel; that the Loss was near equal on both Sides; and that they were last on the Field of Battel. But there are four unanswerable Arguments to prove the contrary, Master, 1. The great Multitude of Prisoners, Officers, and others, that are actually in our Possession, with a considerable Number of Standards and Colours. 2. Our laying not only that call'd the *New Conquests* under Contribution, but Part of old *France*, within a few Leagues of *Paris*; which must needs convince the *French* themselves, that what their Gazetteer advances to the contrary, is false. 3. Our having demolish'd their Lines, almost without Opposition. 4. The Duke of *Burgundy*'s entrenching himself, with his Army, on the Canal betwixt *Ghent* and *Bruges*, without offering to prevent the Disgrace and Dammage of his Country, by our Army's sending Detachments into *France*, to raise Contributions.

Obs. What Account can you give me, *Roger*, of the Circumstances of the Duke of *Burgundy*'s Army? Are they streighten'd for Provisions? Or is there any Probability of their escaping without a second Battel?

Country-m. As to their Provisions, Master, our News differs. The *Flanders* Mails said, they were streighten'd both in Provision and Forrage; but the *Dutch* Mails which came in on *Wednesday* Night, in the Article from *Ghent*, say, they have Provisions plentiful and cheap. But allowing this to be true, those who know the Situation of the Country, and consider, that our Army is betwixt them and Home, are of Opinion, that in a little Time they must exhaust their Provisions; and, humanly speaking, think it scarce possible for their Foot to escape without coming to a Battel; which, there's no Probability, will issue to their Advantage. And as to the Improvement of our Victory, that has hitherto been retarded by the *French* Army's getting *Ghent* and *Bruges* into their Possession, and hindering us to get our heavy Cannon from *Sas van Ghent* so soon, and by so short a Way, as we might otherwise have done; but by this Time they are come to our Army; so that we expect to hear of a Siege, or some other considerable Action, in a little Time.

Obs. I hope, *Roger*, that their taking of *Ghent* and *Bruges*, which has been of such Advantage to them, and so detrimental to us, will be enquir'd into in due Time; and that the Treachery of the Inhabitants who betray'd those Places; and the Neglect of others, who ought to have prevented it, if any such Thing can be prov'd, will be punish'd according to Merit.

Country-m. Indeed, Master, I think it reasonable, that the Government of *Great Britain*, *Holland*, and the *Spanish Netherlands*, should make a strict Enquiry into that Matter; and that such of our Officers as have lost their Baggage, and such of our Traders as have lost their Effects, should have Compensation from those who are guilty.

Obs. You say very well, *Roger*; and I think the Government of the *Spanish Netherlands* ought to take Care in Time to come, to have such Magistrates in those Places, as may be better rely'd on; and such competent Garrisons, as may prevent so scandalous a Surprizal.

Country-m. I hope so too, Master; and doubt not, but the Confederate Generals will take sufficient Care to be inform'd of all the Motions of the *French* betimes; for I have heard old experienc'd Soldiers say, that Intelligence and Diligence are the Life of Business; and since we raise such vast Sums by Way of Contribution, we may afford Money enough to pay Spies to their Content.

Obs. What Papers be those in your Hand, *Roger*?

Country-m. They are her Majesty's gracious Proclamations for a Day of Thanksgiving, Master, on Account of the Disappointmint of the *French* in their Attempt upon *Scotland*, and for our late glorious Victory over the *French* near *Audenard*.

Obs. I am glad to hear that, *Roger*: 'Tis answerable to her Majesty's Piety, to give God the Glory which is due to his Name, among the Titles which he has taken to himself in the Holy Scriptures, that of the *Lord God of Hosts, mighty in Battel, is one. David*, who was a great General, as well as a great Saint, own'd, *That it was God who taught him to make War*: And I am exceedingly pleas'd, *Roger*, to hear, that our Generals have already given God the Glory of the Victory, by observing a Day of Thanksgiving in the Camp; that's the true Way to improve the present Victory, and to obtain more. The Hand of God was so visible in this, that I hope it will have an Influence upon our Armies to reform their Lives, and to create in them a greater Dependance on him, than formerly. To this End it were to be wish'd, that every Officer did according to her Majesty's former Proclamations, suppress, among his own Men, Drunkenness, Swearing, Cursing, and such Enormities as are but too common in all Camps; and that they should set them a good Example, by abstaining from those Things themselves. To this End, some of the Money rais'd by Contributions, would be well bestow'd upon Bibles, and Books of Devotion, to be given among the Soldiers; and particularly those little Pieces printed by those excellent Persons, who promote a Reformation of Manners among us, entitl'd, *A kind Caution to prophane Swearers*; *a friendly Discourse concerning prophane Cursing and Swearing*; *a Rebuke to the Sin of Uncleanness*; *a Dissuasive from the Sin of Drunkenness*; *a serious Reflexion on the grievous Scandal of prophane Language in Conversation*; *the Sea-man's Monitor*; *and an earnest Persuasive to the serious Observance of the Lord's Day*: All these being but short, and writ in a plain familiar Stile, would neither be tedious to read, nor hard to be understood; and, with the Blessing of God, might enable our Officers by Sea and Land

to

to answer the Ends of her Majesty's Proclamation of the 25th of *February*, 1702. by which she was pleas'd 'Strictly to charge and command all Com-'manders and Officers whatsoever, that they do-'take Care to avoid all Prophaneness, Debauche-'ry, and other Immoralities; and that by their 'own good and vertuous Lives and Conversations, 'they do set good Examples to all such as are un-'der their Care and Authority; and likewise take 'Care of, and inspect the Behaviour of all such as 'are under them; and to punish all those, who 'shall be guilty of any of the Offences aforesaid.

Country-m. Had due Obedience been given to her Majesty's Proclamation, Master, much of that Offence which has been given by the dissolute Lives of our Soldiery to the Papists in the *Netherlands*, and elsewhere, might have been prevented. In my Opinion, the King of *Sweden*'s Discipline, and the Care he takes that his Army worship God twice every Day publickly, and to suppress all those Disorders above-mention'd among his Soldiers, is fit to be follow'd by all Christian Generals; for we find God has wonderfully bless'd him, by making his Enemies always to fly before him.

Obs. You say well, *Roger*. In order to reform our Army and Fleet, it would be one good Step, if all our Colonels and Sea-Captains were oblig'd, under Penalties, to have good Chaplains, Men of Learning and Piety, and not the Refuse of the Clergy, as those of the Army and Navy have for most Part been. They that don't live as good Ensamples to their Flock, can never edify nor reform 'em; and such as have not Learning enough to refute the Principles of *Spinosa*, and the Deists, which abound too much among our Men of the Sword, are not fit for such Posts.

Country-m. Pray, Master, don't forget the *Rehearsal:* What do you say to his Assertion in his Paper of the 7th of *July*, *That the Coronation-Oath is no Original Contract*; that Kings are as much Kings before it, as after it; that King *William* was not crown'd for some Time after he was made King, *&c?*

Obs. Tis not bold Assertions, but good Arguments, that will satisfy Men of Sense, *Roger*. Besides, he's very unhappy in his Instance of King *William*; for every one knows, that before the Crown was settl'd upon him, the Instrument of Government; or Claims of Right, was made by the Convention, as the Terms of his accepting our Administration; and tho' those, who, by our Laws, are entitl'd to the Succession, have sometimes enter'd upon the Exercise of the Government before they took the Coronation-Oath, it was always known and understood, that the Government descended upon the Son or Daughter, with the same Limitations that the Father, or other Predecessor, had receiv'd it; tho' some Time might be requir'd before the Ceremony of Coronation could be perform'd. Besides, *Roger*, 'tis plain from all our ancient Historics and Lawyers, that the Coronation-Oath was design'd as an Original Contract. The *Mirror* of Justices, Cap. 1. Sect. 2. gives us this Account of it among our Ancestors, the *Saxons*, after having shew'd, that God had subdu'd the ancient *Britains*, because of their unjust Government, to the Power of the *Saxons*, who conquer'd *England*, there being no less than forty of them who were Companions of the Sovereignty. 'Those Princes (said he) after great Wars, Tribu-'lations, and Troubles suffer'd for a long Time, '*chose themselves one King* to reign over them, to 'govern God's People, and to maintain and de-'fend their Persons and their Goods in Peace, by 'Rules of Law; *and at the Beginning they made the* 'King to swear, that he should maintain the Christian 'Faith with all his Power, and govern his People 'by Law, without having Regard to the Person 'of any one; *and that he should be obedient to suffer* 'Right, as well as his People.

Country-m. That's very plain, Master. Here's both an Original Contract, and a Power of Coercion, by which the King was to be subject to the Law, as well as the People.

Obs. 'Tis so, *Roger*; and our Constitution continu'd the same after the Conquest; for in the Laws of *St. Edward*, ratify'd by *William* the Conqueror, and which were sworn to by all our Kings at their Coronation, we read, that if the King do not govern according to the End for which he was constituted, *He shall not so much as retain the Name of a King, but forfeits his Title. Nec Nomen Regis in eo constabit verum Nomen Regis perdit*, Lamb. Sax. Laws, pag. 142. where the King's Duty is set down at large.

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